

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Lenin's fight to defend
working-class power

—PAGES 8–10

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 74/NO. 16 APRIL 26, 2010

Mine blast kills 29, worst in 40 years

BY ALYSON KENNEDY

CHARLESTON, West Virginia—The exposure of a pattern of repeated safety violations at Massey Energy's Upper Big Branch Mine in Montcoal, West Virginia, has working people here asking, why didn't the government close the mine? A massive explosion ripped through Upper Big Branch April 5, killing 29 miners. Only two survived the blast, one of whom remains in intensive care.

Rescue operations in the days following the blast were halted several times due to dangerous levels of explosive gases. At 12:30 a.m. on April 10 it was announced that the final four missing miners had been found dead, making the explosion at the Upper Big Branch Mine the worst mine disaster in 40 years.

You have to go back to 1970 in Hyden, Kentucky, when 38 miners were killed, for the last coal mine explosion that took so many lives; another 78 miners died in a 1968 mine explosion in Farmington, West Virginia.

The *Charleston Gazette* reported
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Kyrgyzstan president ousted amid protests

BY CINDY JAQUITH

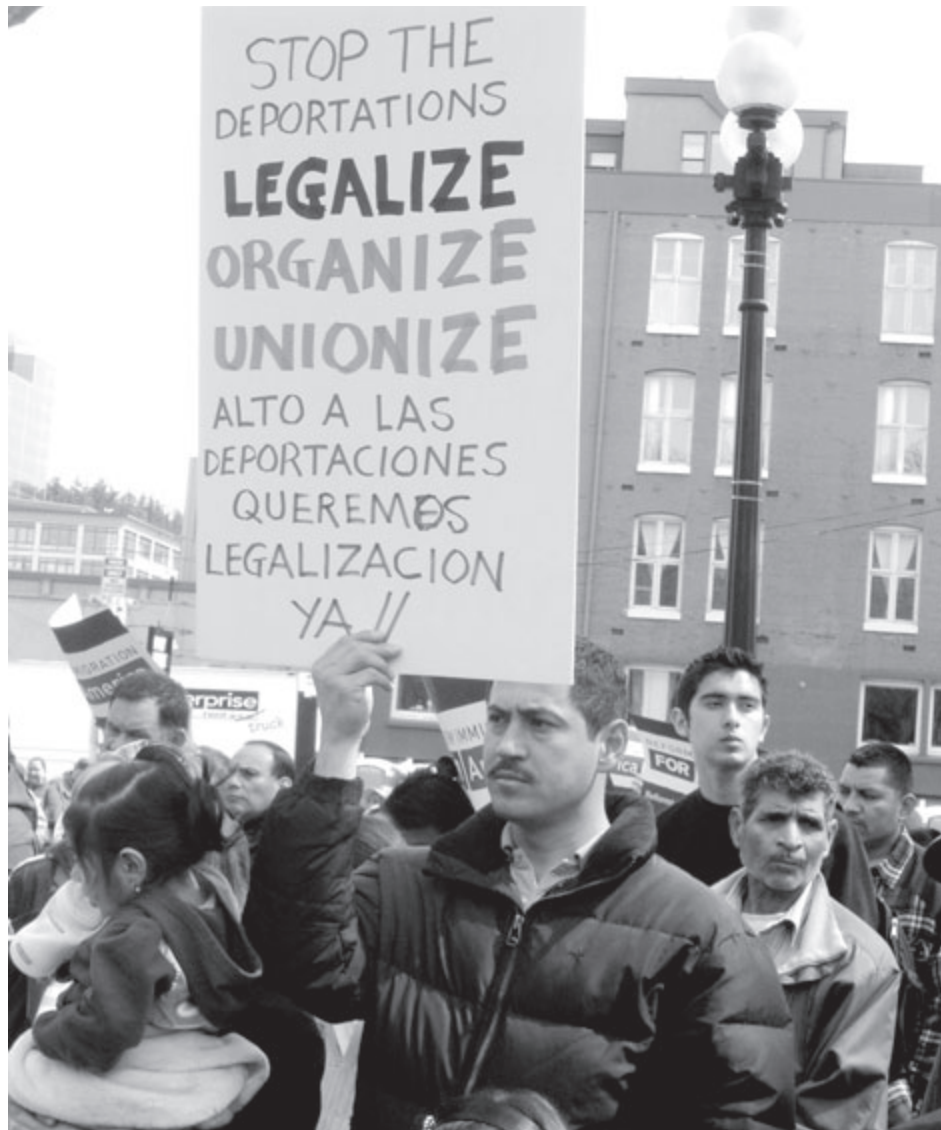
Kurmanbek Bakiyev, the president of Kyrgyzstan, fled the capital April 7 as his elite security forces lost control of the streets and state offices to an angry antigovernment rally there. Opposition bourgeois forces—including former officials under the Bakiyev administration—announced they had formed a new government. Bakiyev's ouster cast doubt over the future of the U.S. air base in Manas, Kyrgyzstan, which is important to Washington's war against the people of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Spontaneous protests had broken out in March in northern villages after the government ordered a big increase in electricity and heating rates that quadrupled utility bills for many working people. Opposition politicians put themselves at the head of the protests, which were also fueled by hatred for the lavish lifestyles of the Bakiyev family and harsh attacks on democratic rights.

As the protests spread to the capital
Continued on page 3

U.S. protests demand rights for immigrants

Build for more demonstrations May 1!



Militant/Scott Breen

March for immigrant rights April 10 in Seattle

BY EDWIN FRUIT
AND CLAY DENNISON

SEATTLE—About 3,000 supporters of immigrant rights filled Occidental Park here April 10 to demand that Congress take action to grant legal status to millions of immigrant workers without papers. Similar protests took place in at least six other cities the same day, including Las Vegas, Nevada, and El Paso, Texas. In Chicago 1,100 rallied at Teamsters Local 705 union hall.

Busloads of participants came from all over Washington State: from Walla Walla, Yakima, Spokane, Tacoma, Centralia, Pasco, and Bellingham. The crowd was largely working class.

Students from Eastern Washington State University in Cheney rode the bus for more than four hours to attend the rally here. A group of students from Whitman College in Walla Walla also attended. Students from the University of Washington in Seattle

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Cuban youth in D.C.: 'It took revolution to change society'

BY PAUL PEDERSON
AND SUSAN LAMONT

WASHINGTON—"Some of you may not realize the visit by Yenaivis Fuentes and Anibal Ramos to this country and this campus is a really big thing," said Dr. Elliott Parris, chair of the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Human Services at Bowie State University, welcoming a crowd of 140 students and faculty to an April 8 meeting there.

"It is a victory for academic freedom," he said. "It took letters of invitation from more than 115 professors from colleges and universities around the country to win the visas for this exchange." This is the first such visit by Cuban students to the United States since 2001.

Fuentes, 23, and Ramos, 30, both leaders of the Cuban Federation of University Students (FEU) are on a
Continued on page 7



Militant/Linda Joyce

Yenaivis Fuentes, right, speaks with high school students April 9 at Duke Ellington School of the Arts in Washington, D.C.

An appeal to readers to help sell, contribute to the 'Militant'

To our readers,

With this issue of the paper we are at the halfway point of the eight-week campaign to win 2,000 new readers, while selling thousands of copies of *Malcolm X*, *Black Liberation*, and *the Road to Workers Power*, by Jack Barnes, and simultaneously raising \$110,000 for continued publication of the *Militant*.

Capitalist politicians and their economic analysts are now working overtime to proclaim the end of the economic downturn. The message is, "Why fight, things are getting better?"

The *Militant* explains a different re-
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For Black workers, it’s a ‘Great Depression’

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

It has been “a Great Recession for whites,” writes Kevin Hassett recently in the conservative magazine *National Review*, but for Blacks “it has been a Great Depression.” No matter how economists try to explain it, Hassett concludes, the simplest explanation is that “discrimination is alive and well.”

Black workers have been among those hardest hit not only by rising unemployment, but by foreclosures on houses and cutbacks in social services.

“African Americans are the ca-boose,” Marc Morial, president of the Urban League, told the media March 24 upon release of the group’s State of Black America report. Last year Black families made 62 percent as much as white families, a decline of 3 percent from 2008 as the economic crisis deepened.

The official unemployment rate for Blacks in March rose by 0.7 percent from the previous month, to 16.5 percent, nearly double the figure for white workers. In some states Blacks’ jobless rate is higher, like in Michigan, where it is 21 percent.

Black workers are also having a much harder time getting another job after they are laid off. They face “longer stretches of unemployment than the general population,” says a congressional Joint Economic Committee report released last month.

The report notes “the overall unemployment rate for the United States has masked the depth of the unemployment problem within the African American community.” One in four Black workers

are without full-time jobs, being either unemployed or underemployed, according to this study. For teenagers who are Black more than 40 percent are without work, compared to the overall teen jobless rate of 26 percent.

According to the Labor Department, the overall unemployment rate for March was 9.7 percent, unchanged from the previous two months. “U.S. Economy Added 162,000 Jobs in March, Most in 3 Years,” headlined the *New York Times*, pitching the report as a sign that the “still-sputtering recovery was gaining traction.”

The hiring of temporary census workers for a few months accounts for almost one-third of these jobs. Hundreds of thousands more census takers are being hired over the next several months.

Barack Obama administration officials have made clear that despite this increased hiring, the jobless rate will remain steady or actually rise since “discouraged” workers—those the government doesn’t count as unemployed or being part of the workforce—are rejoining the jobs search in hopes of finding work. An additional 200,000 people were looking for jobs last month, according to the Economic Policy Institute. One million workers were still considered “discouraged” by the Labor Department in March.

Meanwhile, those facing long-term unemployment grew to 6.5 million without work for at least six months, an increase of more than 400,000 from February.

Quebec: 7,000 protest health tax, rate hikes



Militant/John Steele

MONTREAL—More than 7,000 people took to the streets here April 1 to protest the Quebec government’s imposition of a health tax of \$25 this year—which will rise to \$200 by 2012—and increases in sales and gasoline taxes and electricity rates. The Coalition Against User Fees and the Privatization of Public Services had organized the march weeks in advance, but the budget presented by the Quebec Liberal government Finance Minister Raymond Bachand two days before helped swell the ranks of the protesters.

—BEVERLY BERNARDO

‘War of attrition’ on jobless pay

BY SETH GALINSKY

Looking out for their bottom line, some U.S. companies are taking measures to block workers from collecting even the meager unemployment benefits authorized by law.

Weekly benefits cover between 50 percent and 70 percent of workers’ wages prior to layoff.

Talx, a firm that promises that it “simplifies the unemployment process,” is convincing large corporations to let it handle the paperwork for their response to unemployment filings.

Talx boasts that it saved a bundle for Exelon Corporation, one of the largest electric utilities in the United States. “In the first year of outsourcing [to Talx] Exelon removed \$408,500 in charges to its unemployment accounts due to favorable protests,” the Talx Web site says.

Talx says it handles more than 30 percent of U.S. jobless claims, including those from AT&T, FedEx, McDonald’s, Sears, Tyson Foods, and Walmart.

“Talx often files appeals regardless of merits,” Jonathan Baird, a lawyer at New Hampshire Legal Assistance, told the *New York Times*. “It’s sort of a war of attrition.”

The actions by Talx and similar firms are so egregious that several states passed laws to limit challenges to benefit approvals. According to the *Times*, Wisconsin state unemployment office staff complained that Talx reported in error that applicants were dead, filed “frivolous protests,” and held up many benefit requests.

While capitalist bosses are boosting their profits by blocking many workers from collecting unemployment, they are also going after workers who have fallen behind on their bills.

According to the *Times*, garnishments—pay seizures—jumped 121 percent in the Phoenix area since 2005, 55 percent in the Atlanta area since 2004, and 30 percent in Cleveland between 2008 and 2009 alone.

Sidney Jones, a maintenance worker, took out a \$4,000 personal loan from Beneficial Virginia, now owned by HSBC. In March 2003, after winning a default judgment that included 26.55 percent interest, the bank garnished his wages. Six years later the bank had deducted more than \$10,000 from Jones’s paychecks but says he still owes \$3,965, a sum nearly equal to the original loan.

THE MILITANT

House mortgage crisis looms again

A wave of foreclosures that could dwarf the 2008 surge in mortgage defaults is on the way. It could have devastating consequences for working people. For a working-class explanation of the capitalist economic crisis don’t miss the ‘Militant’ each week.



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The Militant

Vol. 74/No. 16

Closing news date: April 14, 2010

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Published weekly except for one week in January and one week in July.

The Militant (ISSN 0026-3885), 306 W. 37th Street, 10th floor, New York, NY 10018. Telephone: (212) 244-4899

Fax: (212) 244-4947

E-mail: themilitant@mac.com

Website: www.themilitant.com

Correspondence concerning subscriptions or changes of address should be addressed to the Militant, 306 W. 37th Street, 10th floor, New York, NY 10018.

Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the Militant, 306 W. 37th Street, 10th floor, New York, NY 10018.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: United States: For one year send \$35 to above address.

Latin America, Caribbean: For one year send \$85, drawn on a U.S. bank, to

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Quebec anti-immigrant bill targets Muslim dress

BY JOE YOUNG

MONTREAL—A reactionary law proposed here would force Muslim women to uncover their faces when conducting transactions with the Quebec government. Employees of the government who deal with the public would face the same obligation.

Bill 94 is the latest step in the anti-immigrant campaign of the Liberal Party government of Quebec. It bans wearing a niqab, a head covering which shows only the eyes, or a burqa, a full body garment that also covers the head entirely, while doing business with the government.

Quebec law already requires women to uncover their faces when applying for medicare cards or when voting.

Naïma Atef Amed, who wears a niqab, has been expelled from French classes for immigrants in Montreal twice. The second time the government intervened to have her expelled because she refused to remove it.

On March 12 another student, Aisha, was expelled from a French class near Montreal for refusing to remove her niqab.

Many new immigrants in Montreal come from North Africa and practice Islam. They are targets of systematic discrimination and their unemployment rate is close to 30 percent. The government's anti-Muslim campaign is used to intimidate and divide them from other workers here.

Some Muslim organizations have spoken out against the proposed ban. Salam Elmenyawli, president of the Muslim Council of Montreal, said, "It could open the flood gates to discrimination." Alia Hogben, executive director of the Canadian Council of Muslim Women, said, "I'm a little taken aback they've gone so far." Asma Qureshi, a Concordia University student interviewed at the Muslim Student Association, asked, "As long as you're not imposing it on others, isn't it their choice?"

Premier Jean Charest claims Bill 94 is a measure for women's rights and separation of church and state. "An accom-

modation cannot be granted unless it respects the principle of equality between men and women, and the religious neutrality of the state," he said.

The bill has the support of both the governing federal Conservative Party and the federal Liberal Party. The bourgeois nationalist Parti Québécois says the bill should also outlaw the wearing of the hijab by government workers. The hijab is a head scarf that does not cover the face. Amir Khadir, the only member of the social democratic Québec Solidaire in the Quebec National Assembly, supports the bill.

The Quebec Federation of Women (FFQ) also backs the bill. "The bill prohibits wearing the complete veil in public and semi-public institutions, which the FFQ agrees with," stated the group's March 24 press release. "The complete veil is an instrument of oppression and confinement of women in addition to preventing communication with those who wear it."

Michel Prairie, Communist League candidate for mayor of Montreal in last year's election, opposes the bill. "This is a deepening of the effort by the capitalist rulers to divide workers, targeting immigrants who are Muslim," he said. "Talk of defending women's rights and separation of church and state are just cover for this campaign. People have the right to dress as they wish. It's in the interests of the working class to back this fight."

UK: Communist candidates oppose cuts



Militant/Jonathan Silberman

LONDON—Communist League candidates in the United Kingdom Parliamentary elections joined the April 10 protests here and in Glasgow, Scotland, against cuts in social welfare. Paul Davies, right, candidate for London parliamentary constituency of Hackney South and Shoreditch, speaks with another march participant.

"Whichever capitalist party wins the election," Davies said, "working people will face job cuts and attacks on our living standards. This is what the dictatorship of capital has in store for us." Davies introduced marchers to the revolutionary perspective outlined in the book *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power*.

Communist League candidates argue for a crash program of public works to provide work at union rates to build housing, schools, hospitals, and roads and improve public transport, he explained.

On the march and in election campaigning over the weekend, campaign supporters in London sold 11 copies of the book and 11 subscriptions to the *Militant*.

— JONATHAN SILBERMAN

Kyrgyzstan president ousted amid protests

Continued from front page

city, Bishkek, the government, in a last ditch move, offered April 5 to pay half the utility bills of families living in remote northern mountainous areas. Thousands still turned out to protest April 7. Bakiyev ordered snipers to fire at marchers from rooftops. They killed at least 78 people, but demonstrators fought back, seizing some of the cops' weapons and riot shields. They eventually chased the security forces away.

Kyrgyzstan is the second poorest of the former Soviet republics in Central Asia. Half the population of 5.4 million are farmers. Workers and farmers have borne the brunt of an acute economic crisis over the past few years as the capitalist depression widened, sharply increasing poverty in Kyrgyzstan. Official unemployment stands at 18 percent. An estimated 40 percent of the population lives below the official poverty line. Forty percent of the gross domestic product comes from remittances sent to families by relatives working in Russia.

The country became independent in 1991 with the breakup of the Soviet Union. The new Kyrgyz government

embarked on a "privatization" program that turned over many state-run enterprises to whoever offered the highest bribe. When the U.S. government invaded nearby Afghanistan in 2001, Kyrgyz's rulers readily agreed to host a U.S. air base, which became a source of giant profits in fuel sales.

'Tulip revolution'

In what was called the "tulip revolution" in 2005, then-president Askar Akayev, hated for corruption, was overthrown by forces seeking a closer relationship with Washington. He fled to Russia, where he was offered asylum. Bakiyev took power, pledging to fight corruption and poverty.

The Bakiyev family made a fortune from fuel sales to the U.S. air base, which became a more and more hated symbol of corruption amidst the growing poverty of Kyrgyz working people. As opposition to Bakiyev mounted, his regime cracked down on its opponents, jailing some, and disappearing others.

While currying favor with Washington, Bakiyev also promoted a relationship with Moscow, which opposes the U.S. military presence on what it considers its turf. A Russian military base was built in Kyrgyzstan in 2003 near the U.S. facility.

In February 2009 Moscow convinced Bakiyev to tell Washington it was closing its base, after the Russian government offered a large bribe in the form of a \$2 billion investment. But the Obama administration agreed to more than triple the rent it pays for the base, winning Bakiyev's agreement that the base could stay for one year.

Following the overthrow of Bakiyev, Russian prime minister Vladimir Putin was the first to recognize the new regime, putting in a call to its head, Roza Otunbayeva. Washington has not recognized the interim government.

Obama's senior director of Russian affairs, Michael McFaul, sought to discourage speculation, however, that Moscow actually organized the ouster. "This is not some anti-American coup," he said. "And this is not some sponsored-by-the-Russians coup. There's just no evidence of that." Omurbek Tekebayev, a prominent figure in the new government, said, "Even without Russia, this would have happened sooner or later, but . . . I think the Russian factor was decisive."

Otunbayeva has served as foreign minister twice and as ambassador to both the United States and the United Kingdom. She was Bakiyev's first prime minister, but quit after a year in office. She announced that the interim government would take charge for six months until presidential elections.

Appealing to Russia for financial aid, Otunbayeva said, "Russia was important and remains important for us." As for the U.S. air base: "We will not touch the air base. The existing contracts will remain in place." Washington's lease runs out in July.

Last month 50,000 coalition troops passed through the Manas base on their way to or from Afghanistan. Washington briefly shut the base down after Bakiyev's overthrow then reopened it. Military passenger transport flights were temporarily suspended April 9.

MILITANT LABOR FORUMS

CALIFORNIA

San Francisco

Only Union Power Can Enforce Safety on the Job. No Miner—No Worker—Has To Die. Speaker: Joel Britton, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., April 23, 7:30 p.m. 5482 Mission St. Tel.: (415) 584-2135.

TEXAS

Houston

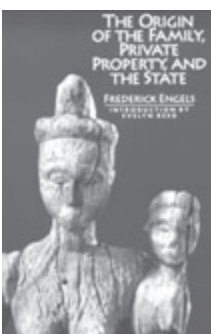
Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power. Benefit for Militant newspaper. Speaker: Omari Musa, Socialist Workers Party. Sat., April 24, 7:30 p.m. 4800 W 34th St., Suite C-51A. Tel.: (713) 688-4919.

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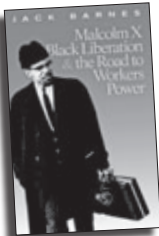


CALENDAR

CALIFORNIA

Venice

Weekend of Solidarity with the Cuban 5. Opening Reception for Exhibit of Antonio Guerrero's Artwork. Sat., May 22, 7:30 p.m. Special Guests: Danny Glover, Ed Asner. *Social Public Art Resource Center, 685 Venice Blvd.* **"Women Behind the Cuban Five" Fundraising Brunch.** Special guest: Dolores Huerta. Sun., May 23, 11 a.m. 685 Venice Blvd. Tel.: (310) 570-5419. *Ausp: International Committee for the Freedom of the Cuban 5.*



Read, Sell, & Discuss

Malcolm X, Black Liberation, & the Road to Workers Power

Houston

Since its arrival, *Militant* supporters have found an interested audience for *Malcolm X, la liberación de los negros y el camino al poder obrero*, the Spanish edition of the new Pathfinder book *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power*. In March, 22 copies of the book were sold in Texas.

At a March 21 protest in defense of immigrant rights here, two area high school students were interested in buying the book along with an introductory *Militant* subscription. They were trying to pool the money in their pockets to buy the book. After a couple of minutes, the father of one of the youths walked by. After listening to the discussion, he pulled out his wallet to make up the difference.

Alejandro, a young meat packer at a Lufkin area poultry processing plant, came by the table several times to review the selection of revolutionary literature. As the rally ended, he returned to the table and said, referring to the U.S. ruling class, “one thing is for sure, we cannot leave these people in charge.” He bought a copy of *Workers Power* in Spanish.

Several long-term readers of the *Militant* are also buying copies of the book. Otilio, a bus driver who takes workers from Mexico to destinations all along the Gulf and Atlantic coasts, made arrangements to pick up the book as he came through Houston. Saying he had read parts of the book in the *Militant*, he picked up a copy for himself, and two more to introduce to friends, coworkers, and passengers.

—Steve Warshell

Seattle

Supporters of the *Militant* participated in a series of activities here April 8–11 with sales of 37 copies of *Malcolm*

X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power along with 44 subscriptions.

At a National Association of Chicana and Chicano Studies conference, a student from San Jose State told volunteer Edwin Fruit that he was thinking of getting the book to find out about how Malcolm X and Martin Luther King’s views were coming closer together toward the end of their lives. Fruit told him that the book explains how their views were more and more diverging. The student decided to get the book and a sub to the *Militant*.

During the three-day conference 25 participants purchased the *Workers Power* book and 28 signed up to become new readers of the *Militant*.

At an April 10 demonstration for immigrant rights, one participant said she wanted to read the *Workers Power* book to learn how to fight for her rights. Seven of the new books were sold at the action—four of them the Spanish edition—and 13 subscriptions.

Militant supporters also participated in a rally supporting Teamster union members fighting for a new contract at Waste Management in Seattle. The company is demanding cuts in pension payments and that workers pay more for health insurance coverage. Two *Work-*



Militant/Jonathan Silberman
Alan Harris (left) promoting *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power*, by Jack Barnes, at protest in London April 10 against government cuts in social services.

ers Power books were sold there, along with three subscriptions.

—Mary Martin

Sydney, Australia

We just had a great week, enabling us to do a big catch up! We sold 14 *Militant* subscriptions and 11 *Workers Power* books—8 of them with subs. These came from a two-day Feminist Conference here, which drew almost 500 people; an African culture event; and an Australia-Cuba Friendship Society event, where 45 people heard a young

woman, Odalys López Sarmiento, from the Asia Pacific Division of the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples, speak about the internationalist missions of Cuban doctors around the world and the Cuban Revolution.

At the Feminist Conference a student originally from the Congo bought *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power* and a subscription. We had met him two weeks ago at the University of Western Sydney and he was on our callback list to get the book.

—Ron Poulson

Appeal to readers to help sell, finance paper

Continued from front page
ality for working people. As the long-term world capitalist depression drags on—with its temporary upticks and recoveries—workers are facing a future of more mine disasters, more deportations of immigrants, more restrictions on abortion rights, millions out of work, and further cuts in hospitals and other vital social services.

The *Militant* also explains another reality for working people: that millions in the United States and around the world are willing to respond to a discussion about the devastating effects of the capitalist crisis and how working people can fight for revolutionary change. Through sales of *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power* and subscriptions to the *Militant*, vanguard fighters are engaging in that discussion.

For distributors of the *Militant* the positive response during the first four weeks of the subscription drive is reason to step up the campaign. The chart shows that 960 readers have gotten subscriptions, and 994 have bought the

book, since the drive began four weeks ago. We should be at 1,000 subscriptions, so we are just shy of where we need to be.

If you think what you are reading about in the pages of the paper and in *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power* is valuable, help get them around. Lend the paper and the book to coworkers, friends, and family. Encourage them to subscribe and buy the book for just \$15.

The campaign to raise \$110,000 for continued publication of the paper is behind schedule at this point in the drive. As of this week \$34,571 has been sent in, 31 percent of the goal. Distributors of the paper will have to place more attention on organizing and following through on the discussions with those who have made financial pledges, and to winning new contributors.

Nearly every area has begun sending in payments and several cities are sponsoring *Militant* fund meetings to build momentum for the fund-raising campaign. Through these efforts the

drive to make the fund can catch up to the campaign to sell the paper and *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power*.

We encourage our readers to send in a few paragraphs or short articles about their efforts to sell and discuss revolutionary perspectives with coworkers, young people, and others.

Please make checks payable to the *Militant*.

—Paul Mailhot, Editor

Campaign to sell ‘Workers Power’ with ‘Militant’ subscriptions March 13–May 12 (week 4)				
Country	Books sold	Subs sold	Subs quota	Subs %
UNITED STATES				
Seattle*	74	75	115	65%
New York	222	169	265	64%
Houston	48	41	65	63%
San Francisco	74	85	150	57%
Philadelphia	47	50	90	56%
Twin Cities	67	75	155	48%
Washington, D.C.	76	52	110	47%
Miami	37	37	80	46%
Chicago	65	54	120	45%
Boston	20	25	65	38%
Atlanta	60	51	140	36%
Des Moines, IA	34	36	125	29%
Los Angeles	46	36	130	28%
Total U.S.	870	786	1610	49%
UNITED KINGDOM				
Edinburgh	11	15	30	43%
London	59	51	90	28%
Total UK	70	66	120	32%
Canada	17	46	100	32%
New Zealand	11	20	65	26%
Australia	15	26	50	24%
Sweden	11	16	20	55%
Total	994	960	1965	48%
Should be		1000	2000	50%
* Raised quota				



Militant/Betsey Stone
Pathfinder table at National Association of Chicana and Chicano Studies conference in Seattle April 8–10. Volunteers sold 25 copies of *Workers Power* book and 28 *Militant* subscriptions.

‘Militant’ fund drive March 13–May 12 (week 4)			
Country	Quota	Paid	%
UNITED STATES			
San Francisco	\$14,000	\$8,855	63%
New York	\$19,000	\$9,200	48%
Twin Cities, MN	\$7,000	\$2,730	39%
Philadelphia	\$3,700	\$1,350	36%
Houston	\$2,500	\$820	33%
Seattle	\$8,000	\$2,400	30%
Des Moines, IA	\$2,500	\$730	29%
Atlanta	\$7,800	\$1,715	22%
Los Angeles	\$8,700	\$1,745	20%
Boston	\$3,500	\$620	18%
Chicago	\$9,600	\$1,620	17%
Miami	\$3,000	\$355	12%
Washington, D.C.	\$6,500	\$0	0%
Other		\$300	
Total U.S.	\$95,800	\$32,440	34%
Canada	\$6,650	\$800	12%
New Zealand	\$3,000	\$451	15%
Australia	\$1,500	\$525	35%
UNITED KINGDOM			
London	\$750	\$30	4%
Edinburgh	\$300	\$0	0%
Total UK	\$1,050	\$30	3%
Sweden	\$500	\$100	20%
France	\$300	\$225	75%
Total	\$108,800	\$34,571	31%
Should be	\$110,000	\$55,000	50%

ON THE PICKET LINE

Airline food workers rally for contract

MIAMI—Hundreds of airline catering workers rallied at the airport here April 7. “We get no respect, no consideration, and a lot of harassment,” Alcine Dorce told the *Militant*. Members of UNITE HERE Local 355 are fighting for a contract with LSG Sky Chefs, Gate Gourmet, and other food service providers. The union is negotiating a contract for 2,000 food-service workers in South Florida.

“We have had no increase in salary since 9/11,” said Winston Garvey. “In 2006 they asked us to take a pay cut. Out of my salary they took 15 percent and I haven’t gotten it back.” Garvey explained that they lost one week’s vacation and all but two paid holidays per year. “Health care is a mess. We can’t afford to go to the doctor.” Garvey has worked at LSG Sky Chefs for 18 years.

—Bernie Senter

N.Y. rally protests closure of St. Vincent’s Hospital

NEW YORK—A rally of 200 hospital workers, doctors, and local residents took place April 8 across the street from St. Vincent’s Hospital to protest the announced closing of the hospital. The hospital’s board has ended emergency, surgical, and in-patient care, and will close the entire hospital April 30.

St. Vincent’s, which opened in 1849, is known for providing care for low-income and uninsured patients.

Some 3,000 workers are slated to lose

their jobs. Over half of them are represented by Service Employees International Union Local 1199. The hospital laid off about 180 in December and another 300 in February.

“The health-care system is really poor. There’s no guarantee for the workers or the patients—it’s just about money,” said a clerk at the rally who has been working at St. Vincent’s for 11 years.

An April 7 *New York Times* article cited “changes in the fabric of a historic neighborhood” and the “low profit in religious work” as some of the reasons for the decision to close the hospital. The article said that “to satisfy its creditors the hospital may sell or lease much of its valuable Greenwich Village real estate.”

—Maura DeLuca

Flight attendants at United organize day of action

SAN FRANCISCO—About 200 United Airlines flight attendants picketed at the airport here April 6 to press their contract demands.

The demonstration was part of a day of action organized by the Association of Flight Attendants—Communication Workers of America at 15 airports, including four outside the United States.

“What do we want? A contract! When do we want it? Now!” the picketers chanted. The union contract expired in January.

“After one full year in negotiations management is nowhere near to addressing the improvements flight attendants seek after pay, benefits, working conditions, and pensions were slashed nearly eight years ago,” said an April 5 union press release.

United imposed concessions after the airline filed for bankruptcy in 2002. Flight attendants’ pay was cut 9 percent, pensions for all but the most senior workers eliminated, and thousands laid off. According to the union, flight attendants are working at 1994 wages levels with a heavier workload. Now the company is demanding more givebacks.

“We have already taken devastating cuts—making 1994 wages, paying more for health care,” said Susan, a 30-year



Militant photos by Bernie Senter, (top) and Betsey Stone (bottom)

Top: Airline catering workers Chelsa Moore, left, and Jessica Ruiz, at Miami airport rally April 7 demanding contract with food service companies. **Bottom:** Flight attendants and supporters at San Francisco airport April 6 resist United Airlines’s attempts to wrest concessions.

United flight attendant, who declined to give her last name for fear of company retaliation. “You can’t take blood out of a turnip!”

A dozen workers from the United Airlines maintenance base, members of Teamsters Local 856-926, participated in the rally.

—Betsey Stone



WASHINGTON—Some 70 flight attendants and their supporters marched April 6 at Washington Dulles International Airport in Virginia.

“A year ago the Federal Aviation Administration lowered the minimum

number of flight attendants required on a number of aircraft,” said Alison Birmingham, a flight attendant based at Dulles for 15 years. “On the [Boeing] 757 the minimum was five flight attendants, now it is four. It’s just not enough to cover all the responsibilities.”

Adriaan Arends, a flight attendant for four years, said that there are currently 2,100 flight attendants on voluntary lay-off, but United is beginning to use non-union flight attendants on some overseas flights. Among the changes United seeks to impose, Arends said, is to reduce the amount of rest time flight attendants are entitled to between flights.

—Paul Pederson

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



April 26, 1985

A New York State Supreme Court judge dismissed the indictment of a cop who killed an elderly Black woman while evicting her from a Bronx apartment.

The indictment of the cop, Stephen Sullivan, who fired two shotgun blasts into Eleanor Bumpurs—blowing off her hand with the first shot, killing her with the second—by a Bronx grand jury led to a right-wing demonstration by cops in February.

Judge Vincent A. Vitale made his decision solely on information provided by the cops. They said the 66-year-old Bumpurs, who was in poor health, made “repeated threats” after they burst into her apartment. Sullivan said Bumpurs waved a large knife and he shot her to protect his fellow cops.

Mary Bumpurs, one of Eleanor Bumpurs’ seven children, told the press, “The judge and the police department are saying, ‘If you’re poor, if you’re Black, then there’s no justice.’”



April 25, 1960

The State Department’s campaign against the Cuban Revolution is becoming more and more ominous. Not a day passes without an attack on the new government as “communist.” Castro’s statements are combed for phrases that can be presented as “anti-American ravings and rantings.” The Cuban press, which is freer than the American, is pictured as “muzzled.”

Scare stories are planted in the press to frighten American tourists from visiting Havana where the streets are more peaceful than those of New York. Big business has clamped down on Cuba’s credit. The right to purchase certain products in the U.S. is denied.

The purpose of this frenzied propaganda is plain. The State Department seeks to isolate the Cuban Revolution, to bury it under a mountain of lies, and then at a propitious moment to move in with force and violence as it did in Guatemala in 1954.



April 27, 1935

TOLEDO, Ohio—The first militant thrust of the nation’s auto workers against the ramparts of the giant General Motors Corporation began here with the walk out of all of the 2,200 employees of the Chevrolet Motors Co. Toledo plant. Organized in the Automobile Workers Federal Labor Union, Local 18384, the Chevrolet workers marched out of the plant in a body and formed mass picket lines, which quickly succeeded in shutting the plant down cold.

Toledo’s auto workers, who set the tone and tempo for the great strike wave of 1934 in the Auto-Lite strike of last May, may again have the distinction of touching off the strike bomb-shell which will have national repercussion. Militants who stood in the forefront of last year’s historic battle are playing an outstanding role in the strike, leading and organizing the pickets, arranging publicity, instilling militancy and discipline into the ranks and developing effective lines of mass strike strategy.

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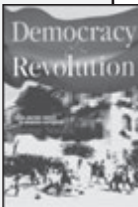
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Place of Black workers in coming revolution

Leon Trotsky's 1933 discussion with American communists about Black struggle

The following is the 14th in a series of excerpts the Militant is running from Pathfinder Press's latest book, Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power, by Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party. We encourage our readers to study, discuss, and help sell the book. This excerpt is from the chapter "Black Liberation and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat." The footnotes used here are added by the Militant, based on facts provided in the book. Copyright © 2009 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

It was [Leon] Trotsky,¹ basing himself on the political conquests of the Communist International, who first explained to us scientifically that it was awakening Black working people to their self-worth, not to their oppression, that would open new prospects for revolutionary struggle in the United States.

In response to questions the party leadership had asked [Arne] Swabeck² to discuss with Trotsky in 1933, the Bolshevik leader explained:

The Negroes will, through their awakening, through their demand for autonomy, and through the democratic mobilization of their forces, be pushed on toward a class basis. The petty bourgeoisie will take up the demand for equal rights and for self-determination but will prove absolutely incapable in the struggle; the Negro proletariat will march over the petty bourgeoisie in the direction toward the proletarian revolution.

The meaning comes through loud and clear, even translated into English from the German-language notes taken by Arne, whose first language was Danish!

Twice in this country in the twentieth century, we've seen in practice how the Black proletariat had to "march over the petty bourgeoisie"—white and Black, including the trade union officialdom, with all their limitations and hesitations—in order to advance the struggle against Jim Crow segregation and other institutions of racist discrimination.

The first time was during the political radicalization that developed under the impact of the Bolshevik Revolution and the spreading capitalist crisis in the decades following World War I. Struggles by exploited farmers and other working people in the 1920s laid the foundation for the labor battles and social movement of the 1930s centered on building mass CIO industrial unions. Workers regardless of skin color more and more fought shoulder to shoulder for union rights and other social goals. These interconnected working-class struggles gave such momentum to the fight to bring down Jim Crow that the impetus outlasted the broad retreat of the labor movement during and after World War II.

As for the second time, some of the people in this room lived through the Black rights battles of the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s and took an active part in them. . . .

Trotsky's starting point in the discussions with Swabeck was the fact that racist oppression and anti-Black prejudice in the United States were the largest obstacle to revolutionary unity of the working class. As a result of such oppression, Trotsky pointed out, few "common actions [take] place involving white and Black workers," there is no "class fraternization." "The American worker is indescribably reactionary," Trotsky said. "This can be seen now in the fact that he has not yet even been won to the idea of social insurance." And, Trotsky added, "The Negroes have not yet awakened, and they are not yet united with the white workers. Ninety-nine point nine percent of the American workers are chauvinists; in relation to the Negroes they are hangmen as they are also toward the Chinese, etc. It is necessary to make them [white workers] understand that the American state is not their state and that they do not have to be the guardians of this state."

Those conditions, of course, have changed substantially since 1933 as a result of class battles. They began shifting in the mid-1930s as a product of the labor struggles that built the CIO, growing opposition to fascism and the



Twice in the 20th century, Barnes says, we've seen in practice what Trotsky explained would happen, that the Black proletariat would simply "march over the petty bourgeoisie"—white as well as Black, including the trade union officialdom—in order to advance the struggle against racist discrimination. Above, members of Southern Tenant Farmers Union meet in St. Francis, Arkansas, 1937. Below, strike by tobacco factory workers in 1936 in Harlem, New York.

spreading imperialist world war, and motion toward a labor party independent of the Democrats and Republicans. These changes accelerated in the 1950s with the conquests of the mass civil rights movement and Black liberation struggles, which had their roots in the massive urbanization, migration to the North, and shifts in the composition of the industrial workforce that began prior to World War II. As a consequence of these struggles, and as a component of them, workers in the United States *did* fight for an important form of social insurance: Social Security. And as a result of the labor battles of the 1930s and civil rights struggles of the 1950s and '60s, they came to see an expanded version of that Social Security, including Medicare, Medicaid, and related programs, as *rights*.

With the rise of industrial unions, more and more workers who are Black, white, Asian, and Latino—native-born and immigrant—today *do* work alongside each other in many workplaces, often doing the same jobs. They *do* engage in common actions and class fraternization. But the fight to combat multiple forms of segregation and racism, and to overcome national divisions in the working class—through mutual solidarity and uncompromising struggles using any means necessary—remains the single biggest task in forging the proletarian vanguard in this country.

Trotsky, in his exchange of views with Swabeck, went on to point out that during a major rise of revolutionary struggle and proletarian class consciousness in the United States,

it is then possible that the Negroes will become the most advanced section. . . . It is very possible that the Negroes will proceed through self-determination to the proletarian dictatorship in a couple of gigantic strides, ahead of the great bloc of white workers. They will then be the vanguard. I am absolutely sure

that they will in any case fight better than the white workers.

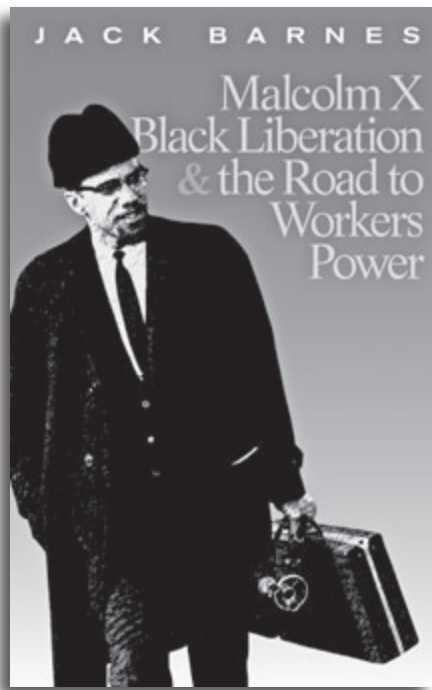
But this can only happen, Trotsky emphasized, "provided the communist party carries on an uncompromising, merciless struggle not against the supposed national prepossessions of the Negroes but against the colossal prejudices of the white workers"—prejudices brought into the working class by the bourgeoisie and the imperialist masters, through their petty-bourgeois agents—"and makes no concession to them whatsoever."

This is what Trotsky had learned from Lenin, the central leader of the Bolshevik Party and Communist International, and from his own long revolutionary experience in the tsarist prison house of nations. Trotsky had deepened this understanding through his discussions with delegates from the United States to the first four congresses of the Communist International from 1919 through 1922. And this is what he worked with the Socialist Workers Party leadership and the rest of the world communist movement, from 1929 until his death, to apply in practice.

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Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power

by Jack Barnes



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1. Leon Trotsky (1879–1940) was a central leader of the October 1917 revolution in Russia and of the Bolshevik Party and Communist International in the early years of the Soviet republic. From the mid-1920s, he was the principal leader of the fight to continue the communist course charted under the leadership of V.I. Lenin against its reversal by a counter-revolutionary privileged caste headed by Joseph Stalin. Trotsky was expelled from the Soviet Union in 1929 and later assassinated by Stalin's agents in Mexico.
2. Arne Swabeck (1890–1986) was a founding leader of the Communist Party in the United States in 1919. He was expelled for supporting the political fight led by Trotsky. He was the national secretary of the Communist League of America in the early 1930s.

Cuban students in D.C.

Continued from front page

one-month speaking tour of U.S. campuses. Fuentes is a sixth-year medical student from Guantánamo, Cuba, and National Public Health Education Coordinator for the FEU. Ramos is a third-year resident in surgery from Manzanillo, Cuba.

Their U.S. visit began March 21 and has already taken them to Atlanta; Twin Cities, Minnesota; and Chicago.

In their many meetings here Fuentes and Ramos made brief presentations about the origins of Cuba's socialist revolution in 1959. Recounting the battle for independence from Spain in the 19th century, they described what it meant for Cuba to be dominated by U.S. imperialism for the first half of the 20th century.

Lively Q&A

There was plenty of time at all the meetings for questions and comments from students.

"What about those who suffered as a result of the revolution?" asked a student at a University of Maryland meeting April 8 attended by 110 students, faculty, and others. He explained that his grandfather, who owned land and cattle in Cuba, lost his holdings after the revolution.

"The revolutionary government didn't drive out people like your grandfather," Ramos said. "They could have stayed. They had the opportunity to help build the country. They had the opportunity to continue to work the land; to make

money from it. If they were a factory owner, they could stay and work, and if they had the skills, they could even be the director of the factory. But what they could not continue doing was exploiting others."

Land was distributed to peasants, Ramos said, pointing to the sweeping land reform in Cuba in the early years of the revolution through which millions of acres of the largest landed estates were expropriated and titles issued to some 100,000 landless peasants.

"Doctors in Cuba get paid less than people who drive cabs for tourists," another student said. "Do you feel that the Cuban government has betrayed you by paying so little?"

"I didn't become a doctor to have pockets full of money," Ramos answered. "For doctors in Cuba, our main concern is helping patients. We don't have pockets full of money but we have enough to live; to have clothes, food, a place to sleep." His comments drew applause.

Another student asked the Cuban visitors what could be done to help improve the education system in the United States.

"In Cuba after the revolution, thousands of young students went out into the countryside to teach people how to read," Fuentes said. "I don't have the answer for how you can improve the education system in your country. But in Cuba we made a socialist revolution."

The Cuban students were welcomed to the University of Maryland by Dr.



Militant/Chris Hoepfner

Yenaivis Fuentes, one of two Cuban medical students on tour in United States, speaks to a crowd of 100 at Howard University April 7. Fuentes and Aníbal Ramos spoke at five campuses in Washington, D.C., area.

Ronald Zeigler, director of the Nyumburu Cultural Center, which has served as the organizing center for student groups and faculty sponsoring the visit for the past eight months. A team of four student volunteers handled translation for the meeting.

Howard School of Law

After speaking at American University on April 5, the Cuban students visited the Howard School of Law for a luncheon and discussion with faculty and students hosted by Kurt Schmoke, dean of the law school, and La Alianza, the organization of Spanish-speaking law students on that campus. Dean Schmoke told Ramos and Fuentes that the law school had also sponsored a well-attended meeting about the Cuban Five several years earlier. The five Cubans he was referring to were framed up by the U.S. government and have been in jail for 11 years for monitoring groups in the United States who were carrying out violent acts against Cuba.

Ramos and Fuentes addressed a broadly sponsored evening meeting at Howard University April 7 that drew some 100 students and faculty from that historically Black college, as well as workers and activists from around the city.

Several faculty members and representatives of student organizations worked together for several months prior to the event, planning every aspect of the visit from publicity to fund-raising to translation of the meeting. Financial contributions from several departments and the undergraduate student government at Howard made the visit possible.

"I liked the way the students answered questions," said Symone Wilson, 20, secretary of the Cimarrones, a student organization at Howard, at the reception following meeting. "They didn't talk around the questions. They talked from the heart."

During their stop in Washington, Ramos and Fuentes addressed a meeting of 50 high school students at the Duke Ellington School of Fine Arts. Jacqueline Maggi, a Cuban artist who teaches visual art at the school, invited them.

Maggi had decorated the room with posters and images from Cuba and the presentation began with a slide show accompanied by Cuban music.

"In Cuba we have established cultural centers in every neighborhood to ensure that people have access to art, music, theater," Fuentes told the students. "There are art schools, much like this one, in every province."

"Is Cuba still a Communist country?" one student asked. Another wanted to know who Fidel Castro is.

"Fidel Castro is our leader," Fuentes said. "Much like Malcolm X or Martin Luther King are your leaders."

She pointed to a painting on the wall of Ernesto Che Guevara and a portrait of Cuban national hero José Martí. "For us he is like Che, the heroic guerrilla fighter, or Martí, the hero of our national independence struggle."

The meeting ended with more Cuban music and a graceful example from the visitors of Cuban salsa dancing.

"This was very informational. Especially about things you never hear about Cuba," said Maurice Holden, a student at the high school. "The U.S. government makes Cuba seem to be the worst place ever. But these students showed us so much about Cuba that you never see."

On April 9 a well-attended reception at the Cuban Interests Section gave sponsoring faculty and students from five campuses a chance to meet each other and find out how all the meetings went. Some have begun a discussion of follow-up activities to build on the success of the tour.

Chris Hoepfner and Omari Musa contributed to this article.

Cuban students visit training hospital



Militant/Linda Joyce

BOWIE, Maryland—Yenaivis Fuentes and Aníbal Ramos (fourth and fifth from right) visited the Department of Nursing at Bowie State University April 8, a historically Black college in Bowie, Maryland. Both nursing students and instructors were pleased to meet the young Cubans and showed them around a training hospital ward.

They stopped at a birthing lab, where students can practice on computerized models that simulate childbirth. When one student had a little trouble delivering a "baby," Ramos stepped in and showed her how Cuban doctors have been trained to do this, much to the delight of the Bowie students.

Students and faculty listened attentively as Fuentes and Ramos described the changes made possible by the socialist revolution in Cuba: giant strides in overcoming the legacy of racist discrimination, thoroughgoing land reform, advances in the status of women, creation of a public health and education system that is a right of the Cuban people, and the internationalism of the revolution starting with the first brigade of Cuban doctors arriving in Algeria in 1963 and continuing today in Haiti and dozens of other countries.

The nursing students appreciated the Cubans' description of how the work of nurses is valued in the Cuban medical system, including the extensive training Cuban doctors undergo in nursing protocol. "In Cuba, it takes five years to become a nurse," Ramos said, adding that there is one nurse for every doctor in Cuba.

Ramos described the impact of the 50-year embargo on the Cubans' ability to keep complex medical equipment running. "Equipment that patients need has to be taken out of circulation because we can't buy replacement parts."

"We don't have the technology you have," Ramos said.

"No, but you have medical care!" exclaimed one student.

"We have medical care not because of technology," Fuentes said, "but because we made a socialist revolution. That's what it took to provide systematic health care for everyone."

—SUSAN LAMONT

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Lenin's fight to defend working-class po

A course to strengthen worker-peasant alliance, combat national opp

Printed below is the second part of the new introduction to Pathfinder Press's 2010 edition of Lenin's Final Fight. The book contains the speeches and writings of V.I. Lenin, central leader of the world's first socialist revolution, during his final political struggle, five years after the victory of the October 1917 revolution. The final part of the introduction will run in the Militant next week. Copyright © 2010, Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BY JACK BARNES
AND STEVE CLARK

The Soviet republic "is based on the collaboration of two classes: the workers and peasants," Lenin emphasized in what turned out to be his last article, "Better Fewer but Better," dictated over several days in early February 1923 in preparation for the upcoming twelfth party congress in April. At the time of the October 1917 revolution, some 80 percent of the population of the new Soviet republic were peasants, and 10 percent were workers. By the early 1920s, in the wake of the devastation of the civil war, the industrial working class had declined both in relative size and political strength.

"In the final analysis," Lenin said, "the fate of our republic will depend on whether the peasant masses will stand by the working class, loyal to their alliance, or whether they will permit the 'Nepmen,' i.e., the new bourgeoisie, to drive a wedge between them and the working class, to split them off from the working class. The more clearly we see this alternative, the more clearly all our workers and peasants understand it, the greater are the chances that we shall avoid a split [in the Communist Party leadership], which would be fatal for the Soviet republic."

Lenin's proposals to strengthen the worker-peasant alliance were not limit-

ed to the tax in kind and revival of light industry to supply food to the cities and needed farm tools and other basic goods to the countryside. He also encouraged the voluntary organization by peasants of state-supported cooperatives to market their produce, provide low-cost government credit to co-ops, and sell manufactured goods in the villages. Such cooperatives, he said, would make possible "the transition to the new system," toward socialist relations of production, "by means that are the *simplest, easiest, and most acceptable to the peasant.*" Cooperatives were a means, he said, "to build socialism in practice in such a way that every *small* peasant could take part in it."

Finally, Lenin emphasized the interconnected effort to promote literacy and education among workers and peasants, to advance electrification (necessary, among other things, for those in the countryside even to be able to read and study after sundown), and to expand industrialization and with it the size and social weight of the industrial working class.

While insistently demanding reduction in state expenditures, including for the revolution's armed forces, Lenin called for increased funding of the People's Commissariat of Education. "Far too little is still being done by us to satisfy . . . the requirements of elementary public education," he said.

"Lenin proposed the revival of a truly revolutionary internationalist course—the proletarianization and the politicization of the state and party structures. . ."

As Lenin pointed out at the eleventh party congress, increased attention to education and training was essential for another reason as well: the lack of "culture among the stratum of the Communists who perform administrative



Bettmann/Corbis

Peasants view display showing electrification of Moscow district, February 1926. Soviet government prioritized expanding this effort throughout countryside. "We must strive to build up a state in which the workers retain the leadership of the peasants, in which they retain the confidence of the peasants," Lenin wrote.

functions." The defeated landlords and capitalists themselves were woefully deficient in culture, he said, but "miserable and low as it is, it is higher than that of our responsible Communist administrators. . ."

State monopoly of foreign trade

In October 1922 Lenin wrote to Joseph Stalin, general secretary of the

or of our proletarian state?"

Lenin also dismissed the argument that legalizing private import and export trade would hit hard at illegal smuggling engaged in by growing numbers of profiteers. To the contrary, Lenin said. It would deal a body blow to the worker peasant alliance, since "instead of combating professional smugglers we shall have to combat all the peasantry of the flax-growing region. In this fight we shall almost assuredly be beaten, and beaten irreparably."

In mid-December Lenin, unable to attend the upcoming December 18 Central Committee meeting, asked party leader Leon Trotsky to "undertake the defense of our common standpoint on the unconditional need to maintain and consolidate the foreign trade monopoly. . . [I]n the event of our defeat on this question we must refer the question to a party congress." In face of these initiatives by Lenin, a majority of the Central Committee at its December meeting reversed the October decision.

A voluntary union of soviet republics

The Bolshevik-led government sought from the outset to establish a union of proletarian Russia and the oppressed peoples long encased within the old tsarist prison house of nations across Europe and Asia. But that goal could only be achieved by the *voluntary* action of those peoples, whose unconditional right to national self-determination was recognized by the new government.

The Soviet congress in January 1918 established the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR) "leaving it to the workers and peasants of each nation to decide independently at their own authoritative congress of soviets whether they wish to participate in the federal government . . . and on what terms."

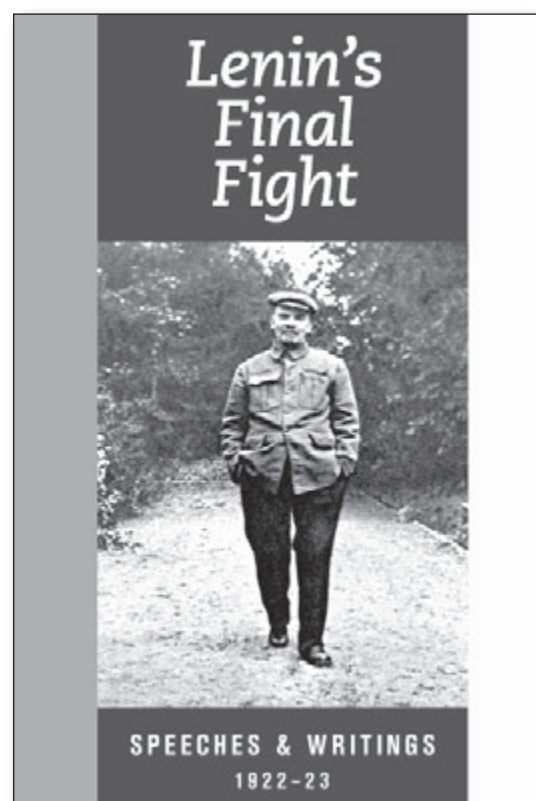
By late 1922, twenty-one autonomous republics and regions had been established within the RSFSR itself, and the revolutionary government was collaborating with soviet republics in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belorussia, Georgia, and Ukraine to form what in December 1922 would become the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Lenin, how-

Central Committee since April, insisting that the committee reverse a recent decision to weaken the state monopoly of foreign trade. Relaxing state control of imports and exports had first been raised by central party leaders Nikolai Bukharin, Gregory Zinoviev, Lev Kamenev, and Stalin earlier that year. Although the Political Bureau adopted a motion by Lenin in May rejecting this course, the Central Committee reversed that decision at its October meeting, from which Lenin was absent due to the effects of the strokes he had suffered earlier in the year.

Bukharin and others contended that individual traders, the "Nepmen," would be much more successful than state agencies in collecting farm produce from peasants for sale abroad, thus raising overall export income and revenues for the Soviet republic. Lenin countered that Bukharin "refuses to see that the profits accruing from the 'mobilization of the peasants' stock of goods' will go wholly and entirely into the pockets of the Nepmen. The question is: Will our People's Commissariat of Foreign Trade operate for the benefit of the Nepmen

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This book brings together, for the first time, the reports, articles, and letters through which Lenin waged the political battle to keep the revolution on a proletarian course. Many were suppressed for decades, and some have never before appeared in English. —\$20

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Power and revolutionary internationalism

Oppression, and proletarianize and politicize state and party bodies

ever, objected to Stalin's initial draft of a Central Committee resolution, which negated the Bolsheviks' long-standing proletarian internationalism by calling for "entry" of these other republics into the *Russian* federation.

"We consider ourselves, the Ukrainian SSR, and others equal," Lenin wrote in a September 1922 letter to the party's Political Bureau, and "enter with them on an equal basis into a new union, a new federation, the Union of the Soviet Republics of Europe and Asia."

In a note to the Political Bureau the following day, Stalin acquiesced to an amended form of this proposal and several other of "Comrade Lenin's unimportant amendments," as he called them. Stalin's note dismissively referred to Lenin's uncompromising opposition to Great Russian chauvinism as the "national liberalism of Comrade Lenin."

Two months later Lenin was outraged to discover that Central Committee member Grigory Ordzhonikidze, in the presence of another CC member, Aleksey Rykov, had physically struck a Communist from Georgia during a dispute over national rights. In Lenin's late December letter to the upcoming party congress, he wrote that the Bolsheviks' support for the right of national self-determination "will be a mere scrap of paper" if the party is "unable to defend the non-Russians from the onslaught of that really Russian man, the Great Russian chauvinist, in substance a scoundrel and a tyrant, such as the typical Russian bureaucrat is."

And Lenin concluded: "That is why internationalism on the part of oppressors or 'great' nations, as they are called (though they are great only in their violence, only great as bullies), must consist not only in the observance of the formal equality of nations but even in an inequality, through which the oppressor nation, the great nation, would compensate for the inequality which obtains in real life. Anybody who does not understand this has not grasped the real proletarian attitude to the national question; he is still essentially petty bourgeois in his point of view and is, therefore, sure to descend to the bourgeois point of view."

In early March 1923, Lenin, who knew he was too ill to attend the upcoming Central Committee meeting later that month, wrote Trotsky with an "earnest request that you should undertake the defense of the Georgian case in the party CC. This case is now un-

der 'persecution' by Stalin and [Feliks] Dzerzhinsky, and I cannot rely on their impartiality." Trotsky did so but, as recorded later in these pages, the motion he placed before the Central Committee was defeated.

Proletarianizing the party and state apparatus

None of these political challenges could be addressed, Lenin insisted, without substantially increasing the weight of politically tested workers and peasants in leading bodies of the party and state.

During the civil war, Lenin pointed out, "We concentrated our best party forces in the Red Army, we mobilized the best of our workers, we looked for new forces at the deepest roots of our dictatorship." Vast numbers of those selfless cadres had been killed in combat or felled by disease. Now it was time to renew this effort under the current conditions facing the Soviet republic.

Lenin's first proposal, presented in the opening sentences of his December 1922 letter to the party congress, sometimes years later referred to as "Lenin's Testament," was to increase the size of the Central Committee to "a few dozen or even a hundred," and to do so by electing workers. Not only would this "raise the prestige of the Central Committee" among Soviet working people, Lenin said, but "the stability of our party would gain a thousandfold." (Lenin made clear that "in this part of my letter the term workers everywhere includes peasants.")¹

What's more, Lenin said, "the workers admitted to the Central Committee should come preferably not from among those who have had long service in Soviet bodies," since "those workers have already acquired the very traditions and the very prejudices which it is desirable to combat." He urged that they "be mainly workers of a lower stratum than those promoted in the last five years to work in Soviet bodies; they must be people closer to being rank-and-file workers and peasants. . . ."

Lenin linked this measure to strengthen the worker-peasant alliance and proletarian character of the state apparatus with an assessment of the leadership qualities of members of the Central Committee then holding the greatest political responsibilities. Lenin was second to none in the Bolshevik leadership in recognizing the objective social forces and class relations underlying *all* challenges confronting the party and still-young proletarian dictatorship. For that very reason, however, he also understood the concrete, even decisive importance at each turning point in politics and the class struggle of what individual party leaders *did*—their accountability for *how they conducted themselves*.

"I think that from this standpoint the prime factors in the question of stability are such members of the CC as Stalin



Women at literacy class in Soviet Union in early 1920s. While demanding reduction in state expenditures, Lenin called for increased funding of People's Commissariat of Education. "Far too little is being done by us" to advance education of working people and youth, he said.

and Trotsky," wrote Lenin in the letter to the party congress. "I think relations between them make up the greater part of the danger of a split [in the party], which could be avoided, and this purpose, in my opinion, would be served, among other things, by increasing the number of CC members to 50 or 100." (The Central Committee at the time had 27 regular members.)

Turning first to Stalin, Lenin noted that, "having become general secretary, [he] has concentrated unlimited authority in his hands, and I am not sure whether he will always be capable of using that authority with sufficient caution."

As for Trotsky, Lenin said, "as his struggle against the CC on the question of the People's Commissariat of Communications has already demonstrated,

may come unexpectedly."

Lenin, who had suffered new strokes in December 1922, dictated this letter to the party congress a few paragraphs at a time over thirteen days between December 23 and January 4. By the time he completed it, he had come to the conclusion that the congress, in addition to acting on his other proposals, had to remove Stalin as the party's general secretary. "Stalin is too rude," Lenin wrote on January 4, "and this defect, although quite tolerable in our midst and in dealing among us Communists, becomes intolerable in a general secretary." Lenin suggested "appointing another man in his stead who in all other respects differs from Comrade Stalin in having only one advantage, namely, that of being more tolerant, more loyal, more polite, and

"Internationalism on the part of oppressors or 'great' nations, as they are called, must consist not only in observance of formal equality but even in an inequality through which the oppressor nation, the great nation, would compensate for the inequality which obtains in real life. . . ."

[he] is personally perhaps the most capable man in the present CC, but he has displayed excessive self-assurance and shown excessive preoccupation with the purely administrative side of the work." Lenin was referring to the tenth party congress's rejection in 1921 of Trotsky's proposal as people's commissar of communications to "shake up" union officialdoms by imposing on them the military discipline and direct state administration temporarily applied to the railway union during emergency civil war conditions.²

"These two qualities of the two outstanding leaders of the present CC can inadvertently lead to a split," Lenin wrote, "and if our party does not take steps to avert this, the split

more considerate to the comrades, less capricious, etc."

"This circumstance may appear to be a negligible detail," Lenin concluded. "But I think that from the standpoint of safeguards against a split and from the standpoint of what I wrote above about the relationship between Stalin and Trotsky it is not a detail, or is a detail which can assume decisive importance."

'Anointed with soviet oil'

Those were Lenin's proposals at the end of 1922 to deepen the proletarianization of the Communist Party and party leadership, and strengthen the worker-peasant alliance on which the advance toward socialism depended.

What about the administrative apparatus of the Soviet state? Five years of experience, Lenin wrote in his letter to the party congress, had demonstrated that workers and peasants had taken it "over from tsarism and slightly anointed [it] with Soviet oil." Now, he said, "we must, in all conscience, admit [that] the

Continued on page 10



V.I. Lenin addressing Third Congress of Communist International, July 5, 1921.

1. The record of Joseph Stalin's efforts to suppress this letter, first by keeping it from the party's leadership committees and congress and later by denying its authenticity, is explained in footnotes 1 and 3 of chapter 5, "Lenin's Letter to the Party Congress," pp. 222, 223.

2. Lenin's views in this political dispute—which has come to be known one-sidedly as the "trade union debate," although much broader issues of communist leadership and program were at stake—can be found in the opening 100 pages or so of Lenin's *Collected Works*, volume 32.

‘Lenin’s Final Fight’

Continued from page 9

apparatus we call ours is, in fact, still quite alien to us. It is a bourgeois and tsarist hodgepodge.”

In two articles, dictated in late January and early February 1923 after partially recovering from his latest strokes, Lenin made proposals, focusing on the reorganization of a Soviet government institution called the Workers and Peasants Inspection (WPI). These articles, entitled “How We Should Reorganize the Workers and Peasants Inspection” and “Better Fewer but Better”—the last Lenin wrote before a final debilitating stroke on March 10, 1923 (he died in January 1924)—were published in January and early March in *Pravda*, the daily newspaper published by the party’s Central Committee.

The Workers and Peasants Inspection, a government body established in early 1920, had been chaired by Stalin from its origins until his election as general secretary in April 1922. Its record up to that point, Lenin said, had been “a hopeless affair.” It did not “enjoy the slightest authority,” and “everybody knows that no other institutions are worse organized.” But Lenin rejected as “fundamentally wrong” solving this problem simply by abolishing the Workers and Peasants Inspection, the alternative Trotsky had proposed.

Instead, Lenin urged that it be combined with the Control Commission of the Central Committee, which was mandated, among other tasks, with “combating the bureaucratism and careerism that have crept into the party.” He proposed that the party congress elect seventy-five to one hundred new members to the Control Commission. “They should be workers and peasants,” he said, “and should go through the same party screening as ordinary members of the Central Committee, because they are to enjoy the same rights as the members of the Central Committee” and meet together with them.

In addition, Lenin proposed that a selection be made of “a compact group” of these new Control Commission members “whose duty it will be to attend all meetings of the Political Bureau.” It was essential, he emphasized, that they “not allow anybody’s authority without exception, neither that of the general secretary nor of any other member of the Central Committee, to prevent them from putting questions, verifying documents, and, in general, from keeping themselves fully informed of all things and from exercising the strictest control over the proper conduct of affairs.”

In the opening sentence of “Better Fewer but Better,” Lenin cautioned that the Workers and Peasants Inspection should not “strive after quantity” or “hurry.” The state administration, he said, “is so deplorable, not to say wretched, that we must first think very carefully how to combat its defects, bearing in mind that these defects are rooted in the past, which, although it has been overthrown, has not been overcome. . . .”

By drawing more combat-tested and politically respected workers into leading bodies of the party and state, and providing them the education and training necessary to guide and monitor the functioning of these bodies, Lenin said, “we must make the Workers and Peasants Inspection a really exemplary institution, an instrument to improve our state apparatus.”

This process of political rejuvenation

within the Soviet Union, Lenin emphasized, would be reinforced by the results of the encouragement the October revolution and Soviet republic were giving to the nationally oppressed toilers “of the East, India, China, etc. . . . The general European ferment has begun to affect them, and it is now clear to the whole world that they have been drawn into a process of development that must lead to a crisis in the whole of world capitalism.”

Finally, in the closing paragraphs of “Better Fewer but Better,” Lenin pulled together the central political threads of the half-year-long political battle he was leading. “We must strive to build up a state in which the workers retain the leadership of the peasants, in which they retain the confidence of the peasants,” Lenin wrote. “. . . We must reduce our state apparatus to the utmost degree of economy. We must banish from it all traces of extravagance, of which so much has been left over from tsarist Russia, from its bureaucratic capitalist state machine.

“Will not this be a reign of peasant limitations?” Lenin asked, provocatively posing the question he knew would be raised by members of the Central Committee who opposed his course.

No, Lenin replied. Only by exercising “the greatest possible thrift in the economic life of our state” would the Soviet leadership, “speaking figuratively, be able to change horses, to change from the peasant . . . horse of poverty, from the horse of an economy designed for a ruined peasant country, to the horse which the proletariat is seeking and must seek—the horse of large-scale machine industry, of electrification. . . .”

“These are the lofty tasks that I dream of for our Workers and Peasants Inspection,” Lenin said. “That is why I am proposing the amalgamation of the most authoritative party body [the Control Commission of the Central Committee] with an ‘ordinary’ people’s commissariat [the Workers and Peasants Inspection].”

‘Politicizing the ministry’

At the twelfth party congress in April 1923, the Stalin-led majority of the Central Committee quashed all mention of several of Lenin’s proposals, while pay-



Granma

Che Guevara addressing seminar on youth and revolution at Ministry of Industry in Havana, May 9, 1964. Party cadres must be drawn from “exemplary workers, vanguard workers—those on the production front who speak with authority and go to the front lines” to advance the revolution. In that spirit, Che called on young communists to “politicize the ministry” as only road to transform it from “a cold, bureaucratic place.”

ing lip service to others and gutting them of any revolutionary proletarian content.

Georgian communist P.G. Mdivani, for example, was ruled out of order at the congress when he sought to read from Lenin’s March 1923, letter to him saying Lenin was “indignant over Ordzhonikidze’s rudeness and the connivance of Stalin and Dzerzhinsky” and was preparing “notes and a speech” on the rights of oppressed nations to present at the party gathering. Lenin’s March 6, 1923, letter to Mdivani can be found in chapter 9 of this book.

At the same time, claiming to act on Lenin’s final proposals to the party congress, Stalin presented the report “On the Organization Question,” which was adopted. The report increased the size of the Central Committee from twenty-seven to forty regular members; expanded the Control Commission and merged it with the Workers and Peasants Inspection; and called for electing to these positions “primarily local party workers, and, in particular, those from the working class who have the best ties with the proletarian masses.”

What Lenin had proposed in his last two articles, however, was not an administrative shuffle, but the revival of a truly revolutionary internationalist course—the *proletarianization*, and simultaneously the *politicization*, of the entire state and party structures—with the aim “to create a republic that is really worthy of the name of Soviet, socialist, and so on and so forth.”

“Let us hope,” Lenin said, “that our

new Workers and Peasants Inspection will abandon what the French call *pruderie*, which we may call ridiculous affectation, or ridiculous swagger, and which plays entirely into the hands of our Soviet and party bureaucracy. Let it be said in parentheses,” he added, “that we have bureaucrats in our party offices as well as in Soviet offices.”

Some four decades later, addressing similar leadership challenges during the opening years of the Cuban Revolution, Ernesto Che Guevara—speaking to young communists working in Cuba’s Ministry of Industry, which Guevara himself headed—noted the “qualitative change in our party [that] occurred when all the bad leadership methods were abandoned, and exemplary workers, vanguard workers—those workers on the production front who could really speak with authority and who were also the ones going to the front lines—were elected to membership.”

That was the spirit in which Che called on the young communists “to politicize the ministry.” Doing so, he said in the May 1964 talk, was the only way to fight to transform it from being a “cold, a very bureaucratic place, a nest of nit-picking bureaucrats and bores, from the minister on down. . . .”³

(To be continued next week)

3. Ernesto Che Guevara, “Youth Must March in the Vanguard” (May 1964), in *Che Guevara Talks to Young People* (Pathfinder: 2000), pp. 147,150 [2009 printing].

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Quebec: Artists host Cuban revolutionary

Following is an abridged version of an article titled “Revolution 101” that appeared in the March 28 edition of the online journal RueFrontenac.com, produced by locked-out workers from the Journal de Montréal. Reprinted with permission. Translation is by the Militant.

BY JESSICA NADEAU

This is the story of a Chinese general who made the Cuban revolution at the side of Che, and of a Quebec sculptor, incredibly eccentric and nationalist. This is the story of a surreal encounter between two men who, each in their own way, have conducted their struggle: the one by arms, the other through the arts.

Night falls gently on the old home of the artist. They are there waiting for him, drink in hand. They are about forty. A fire-eater does his act, together with a nice gypsy who sings her grief with a deep voice in the language of Cervantes.

For the occasion, the artist has displayed a huge banner demanding the release of five Cuban political prisoners held in the United States. The same found in airports in Holguín and in Cayo Coco. Another, equally huge, is the name of all countries that have denounced the U.S. embargo that is starving Cuba. Several guests wear a badge of *Cu-bec Libre*. On the street overlooking the Parc Jeanne-Mance, passersby look on with curiosity.

The artist and the revolutionary

The artist is Armand Vaillancourt.

The revolutionary is General Armando Choy, a true monument of the Cuban revolution.

The sculptor makes the point that he cleaned up the house for the occasion. He is delighted to receive a revolutionary, a true one. “It was worth doing a cleanup for the occasion, wasn’t it?”

The general arrives. The gate opens. Everyone comes forward with bated breath.



Rue Frontenac photos by Rogerio Barbosa

Top: Retired Cuban brigadier general Armando Choy, left, with well-known Quebec sculptor Armand Vaillancourt, center, and translator Martin Koppel outside Vaillancourt’s home March 18. **Bottom:** Banner outside Vaillancourt’s home of Cuban Five, revolutionaries framed up and imprisoned in the United States since 1998, reads: “Prisoners of Imperialism; our heroes are symbols of struggle against terrorism.”

Handshakes, photos, smiles. He is given a tour of the court of Armand Vaillancourt. The old eccentric takes the old revolutionary into a faded away plastic snow shelter to show him a car built in another era. The general is all smiles. I learned later that he spoke with Armand Vaillancourt about boxing—each in his respective language. Beyond words, they understood each other.

Culture and revolutionary process

It’s time for dinner. A table of honor has been set up for the occasion. The general sits in the middle. He speaks, thanking Armand Vaillancourt for having invited him to his place and introducing him to all these people.

He had asked to be introduced to Quebec culture, and he has found it. Not what we see in magazines, no. Armand Vaillancourt had gathered around him 40 friends: visual artists, musicians, writers, editors. “People who are not molded into the system,” says Vaillancourt.

General Armando Choy praised culture, the men and women who invent, transmit, and rediscover it every day. He speaks Spanish. His interpreter translates. In the dining room, the silence is total. Everyone is hanging on his every word. The general speaks about culture and revolution. “Without culture, we cannot understand a true revolutionary process.” These are not his words; he is quoting Fidel.

He sings the praises of Cuban culture, of the importance that the party attaches to it, particularly over the last decade with the campaign for a massive participation in cultural activity. It’s short, it’s simple, it’s effective. In making speeches, the general has learned from the best.

“Even with all the difficulties we have experienced in the revolutionary process, particularly the economic problems with the blockade by the United States, culture has made great progress in our country. And we are very happy to be with you today because throughout the

history of humanity, women and men of culture have defended their people and their country.”

The applause is lively. But very quickly its ardor intensifies as the general concludes: “I would like to thank Mr. Vaillancourt and his wife for this meeting here because it is an encounter not with me, but with the Cuban revolution.”

The general and Rue Frontenac

The music starts again softly. People hum the classic *Commander Che Guevara* while everyone helps themselves to the meal. The consul general of Cuba [Sergio Vélez Camhi] kindly gives me his place for a few minutes, time to do a short interview with the general.

I speak to the general about the media that I proudly represent, Rue Frontenac, a newspaper published by workers who were locked out by their employer. The general is interested; it is he who asks the questions. He listens, thinks for a moment, then launches into the discussion:

“I feel the difficulty of your fight, I’m hurt by it. The working class is totally protected in our country and its voice is recognized. Workers have many social benefits. We must find a solution to this, to give justice to those who are right. And to see the number of workers who are unemployed, it seems to me that it is the workers who are right.”

The revolution ‘stronger than ever’

We move on to his vision of the revolution, 50 years later. His gaze is incisive. He commands respect. He speaks with determination about the revolution, “his” revolution.

“The revolution is stronger than ever. We know very well the stakes, the questions on which we must work and the things we need to strengthen. [...] We are always working within the revolution to make improvements and strengthen the revolutionary process in the country.”

He also talks about the environment. At 77 years old, after decades of service in the Revolutionary Armed Forces, today he chairs a committee on the restoration and preservation of the highly contaminated bay of Havana. He devotes an entire chapter to this issue in his book, *Our History Is Still Being Written*, which he came to promote in Montreal.

This is the story of a Communist revolutionary and of media workers locked out for over a year. It’s the story of a surreal encounter between combatants who, each in their own way, are waging their struggles and refusing to be crushed by their opponent, no matter how powerful it is.

NEW INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE OF MARXIST POLITICS AND THEORY

Issue number 13

Our Politics Start with the World

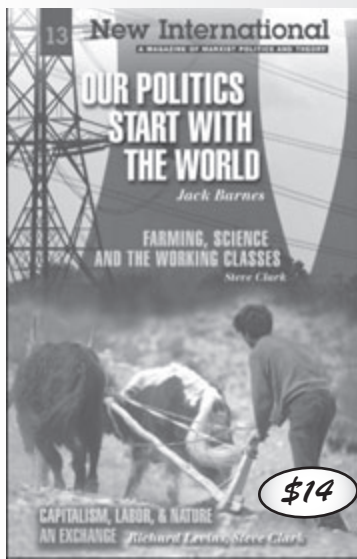
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UK gov’t expands use of trials without jury

BY JONATHAN SILBERMAN

LONDON—Four men have been convicted of robbery here by a judge without a jury. They received prison sentences ranging from 10 to 20 years. The trial, which ended March 31, follows legislation enacted by the Labour government in 2003 that came into force in 2007, providing for the first nonjury crown court criminal trials in England and Wales for 350 years.

As with many such attacks on democratic rights, the trail was blazed by successive London governments conducting their war against Irish national independence. Nonjury “Diplock courts”

were introduced in Northern Ireland in 1972, named after the then Law Lord, Kenneth Diplock.

The defendants in the case were tried three times previously but never convicted. Their third trial collapsed amid charges of jury tampering. In justifying the use of the nonjury trial, an appeals court judge cited the danger of jury tampering and costs. “[Y]ou have to choose between hospitals and schools and armour for our troops in Afghanistan, and all the other demands on public money,” he said.

Nonjury trials are the latest in a series of measures that limit democratic rights.

Many of the restrictions have been carried out under the banner of the “war against terrorism,” such as a succession of Terrorism Acts. Once on the statute book, they can be used as and when the state considers it useful. Antiterrorist laws were used to freeze the assets of the Icelandic bank Landsbanki after it collapsed in 2008.

Trade unionists have faced an increasing number of legal challenges to strike action. The antiunion laws were enacted by the Conservative government and have been kept intact by the Anthony Blair and Gordon Brown Labour governments.

Legalize undocumented workers!

Demonstrations in many cities across the United States May 1 are an opportunity to continue the fight against deportations and for legalizing undocumented workers.

The demand for legalization that workers will put at the center of these actions is not an “immigrant” issue, but a life-and-death question for the entire working class.

The boss class wants to make working people pay for the capitalist economic crisis. To shore up their profits, they are speeding up production lines and skimping on safety. The killing of 29 coal miners in West Virginia is one of many consequences of this drive for profit.

The capitalist government and its parties, the Democrats and Republicans, are also going after the social wage, including Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid, which workers won through decades of struggle. They are closing down hospitals, cutting back on mass transit, reducing library hours, and laying off teachers.

As conditions worsen, the unions are getting weaker. The labor officialdom tries to defend a narrowing layer of workers, rather than the millions exploited by capitalism. How can we stand up to the bosses and rebuild a union movement that will fight

for the entire working class? How can we organize to take power out of the hands of the wealthy rulers and begin to organize society on the basis of international solidarity, not on protecting profit?

A key step is to not allow the bosses to divide us by pitting workers with papers against workers without. Joining the fight for legalizing undocumented immigrants strengthens the fight for jobs and health care, for job safety, against racist discrimination, and for immediately ending U.S. wars abroad.

The so-called immigration “reform” bills are a sham and a diversion from this fight. They offer the carrot of a rocky, pothole-filled “road to citizenship”—for some, but not for others—and the stick of increased militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border and a national identity card. The capitalist class knows that as the economic crisis grinds on, there will be more resistance. They want to increase their ability to blacklist workers and others who speak out.

By marching year after year, immigrant workers have shown that they will not be intimidated or give up their struggle. That fight strengthens the entire working class.

Join the May 1 protests and demand: Stop the raids and deportations! Legalize all undocumented workers now!

Actions demand rights for immigrants

Continued from front page

passed out leaflets announcing a May 3 student strike to protest budget cuts.

More than 2,000 people joined the rally in Las Vegas, including contingents from California, Arizona, Colorado, and New Mexico. There was significant union participation from the Culinary Workers/UNITE HERE, Laborers Union, Ironworkers, and the Service Employees International Union.

One hundred workers came to Las Vegas in vans organized by the United Farm Workers. Juan Carlos, 23, a pistachio worker from Delano, California, told the *Militant* that in his opinion these marches were needed “to make real what we ask for—that they pay us what we deserve and give us immigration reform. They need to give us papers.”

Many protesters carried signs calling for an end to raids and deportations. Michael Wooten, 26, a UPS worker who is African American, told the *Militant* he came out to support his friends. “Why is this country treating immigrants like criminals?” he asked.

U.S. Senate majority leader Harry Reid addressed the crowd. Reid, along with President Barack Obama, is backing an immigration “reform” proposal from Democratic senator Charles Schumer and Republican senator Lindsey Graham. (See April 5 *Militant*.)

According to the *New York Times*, Reid said that to gain legal status undocumented workers would face “a

penalty and a fine, people will have to work, stay out of trouble, pay taxes, learn English.”

“It’s not so bad, is it?” asked Reid.

Some immigrant rights groups are taking their distance from the Schumer-Graham “reform.” An article in the Spring 2010 newsletter of the National Immigrant Solidarity Network said that “in some ways, their proposal is even worse” than previously defeated anti-immigrant bills.

U.S. congressman Luis Gutiérrez, a prominent proponent of an immigration reform bill that is similar to the Schumer-Graham proposal, also spoke at the Las Vegas rally.

The April 10 actions were used to build support for upcoming actions May 1.

At the Seattle rally volunteers leafleted the crowd to publicize this year’s May 1 march and rally for immigrant rights there. Participants said that there would also be marches in Tacoma, Yakima, Pasco, Spokane, Bellingham, and Centralia.

Actions to demand legalization of immigrants are planned May 1 in Chicago; Dallas; Los Angeles; New York City; Portland, Oregon; and Washington, D.C.

Militant readers can e-mail information on May 1 actions in their areas for inclusion in upcoming issues to themilitant@mac.com or by fax to (212) 244-4947.

Eric Simpson in Las Vegas and Betsy Farley in Chicago contributed to this article.

Mine blast kills 29

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April 8 that “parts or all of Massey Energy’s Upper Big Branch Mine were ordered closed more than 60 times in 2009 and 2010, and the mine was repeatedly cited in recent months for allowing potentially explosive coal dust to accumulate.” Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) inspectors, who conducted a quarterly inspection of the mine right before the explosion, issued citations for illegal accumulations of coal dust. There were 57 safety violations against the mine operator in March alone.

In January, the Upper Big Branch Mine was issued two citations totaling more than \$136,000 by MSHA inspectors for not developing or following a proper ventilation plan. About 38 percent of the violations issued against the company in the past three years were considered “significant and substantial” by the federal agency. That is MSHA’s terminology for a violation that is likely to result in serious injury.

An editorial in the April 7 *Charleston Gazette* said, “All explosions are preventable. But this one wasn’t prevented. Safety inspections found the presumed cause, in advance—yet the problem wasn’t corrected, and miners died needlessly.”

Safety sacrificed for production

The callous disregard for miners’ safety came as Massey was speeding up production of the highly profitable type of coal extracted from the Upper Big Branch Mine. The mine produces metallurgical coal used to make steel. The high demand for “met” coal internationally has increased prices to about \$200 per ton. In the fourth quarter of 2009, coal production at the mine almost doubled from the previous three months, and the profit-fueled plans of Massey Energy were for further increases.

The company’s practice is to challenge most citations, no matter how big or small, as other coal companies routinely do. According to an Associated Press dispatch, MSHA has “a backlog of some 82,000 violations and \$210 million in contested penalties” pending against U.S. coal companies.

Kelly Pritt, 29, from Mammoth, West Virginia, whose father and uncle were coal miners, told the *Militant*, “These fines mean nothing; the companies don’t correct the problems. What’s really needed is for all miners, union and nonunion alike, to walk out and not return to work until the conditions are made safe and they can return home unharmed at the end of their shifts.”

“Massey does not follow the regulations,” said Evelyn Morgan from Ashford, West Virginia, widow of a miner who had belonged to the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA). “They get all these violations and they are tied up in court.” Morgan joined a vigil here April 12 of several hundred.

Massey “volunteered to pay for all of the funerals,” she noted, “but what is that to [CEO Don] Blankenship? Why not shut down the mines and make them show they’re improving safety and make them correct the violations? They need to be held accountable.”

Massey “cares more about making money, than about the miners,” was how the wife of one construction worker who asked not to be identified explained it to the *Militant*. “It’s all about the dollar.” She said she grew up with eight of the miners who were killed in the explosion.

Working people have put together their own gatherings throughout the week to express their solidarity. On April 9, 300 miners and their families attended a candlelight vigil in Madison, West Virginia, to offer support to those who had someone in the blast and to get whatever sparse news was available about what happened in the mine. Hundreds more came out April 10 for a vigil behind the Marsh Fork Elementary School in Naoma, organized by the Service Employees International Union District 1199.

About three years ago many miners at the Upper Big Branch Mine voted for the UMWA in two union elections. The first vote was a tie and in the second, the union lost by 14 votes, Phil Smith, a UMWA spokesman, told a *BusinessWeek* reporter.

Smith said between 1984, when Massey defeated a UMWA strike, and 1988 the company sold or closed 18 of the 23 Massey facilities that had a union.

Today, the UMWA represents workers at only two Massey-owned companies, both of them coal processing plants.



April 10 immigrant rights rally in Las Vegas